

via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Oscar Chincilla Banegas Attorney General of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2220 1756 or 2232-0226 Sr. Arturo Corrales Minister of Interior of Honduras
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June 21, 2014

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are outraged at the recent murders of indigenous community leaders in the Department of Intibucá: **Irene Meza** in San Francisco de Opalaca and **William Jacobo Rodríguez** in Río Blanco.

On May 26 Irene Meza was killed in cold blood in San Francisco de Opalaca as he was leaving an important indigenous assembly to review an audit of a fraudulent election last November and discuss construction of an indigenous government. Hugo Sánchez, an employee of the ex-mayor that the National Party tried to impose, arrived in a vehicle, pulled out a pistol and fired on community member Plutarco Bonilla and on Irene Meza, wounding him in the abdomen and chest. While Irene Meza's wife (a town councilwoman) and a driver were taking him to the hospital in La Esperanza, a group of armed men attacked the car, causing the vehicle to crash. The men then approached the car and shot six more times at Irene Meza.

On May 24 community activist William Jacobo Rodríguez was murdered in Río Blanco, where the community and its indigenous council have been blocking the construction of the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Dam, a joint venture of SINOHYRDO (China) and DESA (Honduras). (A culprit has confessed to the murder.) After one year of the Lenca people's peaceful encampment at the entrance to the construction site, there is a heightened level of volatility. Police, stationed at the DESA office, have broken into homes and arbitrarily detained and tortured two indigenous leaders, Lindolfo Benítez and Salvador Sánchez. They even threatened to kill children in the houses. They also threatened Francisco Javier Sánchez, President of the Indigenous Council of Río Blanco and Coordinator of Land and Territories for COPINH (Civic Council of Indigenous Leaders of Honduras).

We strongly urge you to:

- conduct a thorough investigation and immediate application of justice for the murders of William Rodríguez and Irene Meza;
- investigate and punish the repressive forces responsible for the torture of Lindolfo Benítez and Salvador Sánchez and withdraw the police exercising repression in Río Blanco;
- end the political repression of the Lenca people and criminalization of their leaders

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
Lisa Kubiske, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via email
Amanda Johnson-Miller, Human Rights and Labor Office, US Embassy ~ via email
Kelsey Cambronne, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via email
Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3992
Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

May 28_HondurasSolidarity

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: